

Message Text

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16

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 /069 W

----- 025439

R 290755Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7813

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJ: CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR AND SIX MPAS JOIN

PAKISTAN PEOPLES' PARTY

THE FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL IN PESHAWAR:

1. SIX PRO-GOVERNMENT MEMBERS OF NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY (INCLUDING FOUR MINISTERS) ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 23 THAT THEY HAD DECIDED TO LINK THEMSELVES MORE CLOSELY TO BHUTTO GOVERNMENT BY JOINING PAKISTAN PEOPLES' PARTY. TIMING OF THEIR DECISION FOLLOWED CLOSELY ON HEELS OF ANNOUNCEMENT BY CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR EARLIER THIS MONTH THAT HE HAD AFFILIATED HIMSELF WITH PPP.

2. THE FOUR MINISTERS, IN ADDITION TO GANDAPUR, WHO SWITCHED TO THE PPP ARE: MUZAMMIL SHAH, INFORMATION AND REVENUE; HUMAYUN SAIFULLAH, WORKS, PWD AND IRRIGATION; HAQ NAWAZ KHAN, HEALTH, LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS; AND AZMAT ALI KHAN, MINERALS, HOUWING AND FORESTS. THE TWO OTHER MPAS IN GROUP ARE MAKHDOOM ATAUR REHMAN AND MOHAMMAD NAWAZ.

3. CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR AND MOST OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP

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HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN ASSOCIATED TOGETHER IN LOOSE ASSEMBLY GROUPING

CREATED BY FORMER GOVERNOR ASLAM KHATTAK KNOWN AT THE UNITED FRONT. ONLY MUZAMMIL SHAH AND MOHAMMAD NAWAZ HAD OFFICIALLY BEEN MEMBERS OF QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE; GANDAPUR HAD BEEN AN INDEPENDENT, HAQ NQWAZ A MEMBER OF JAMIATUL ULEMA-I-ISLAM AND THE OTHERS HAD BEEN AFFILIATED WITH EITHER THE CONVENTION OR COUNCIL MUSLIM LEAGUE.

4. ADHERENCE OF THIS GROUP TO PPP INCREASES STRENGTH OF PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY TO 13, MAKING IT LARGEST SINGLE PARTY IN GOVERNMENT COALITION OF 24. OTHER MAJOR COMPONENT OF COALITION IS STILL QAIUM MUSLIM LEAGUE WITH STRENGTH OF NINE MPAS.

5. COMMENT: CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR HAS TAKEN CREDIT FOR BRING-ING THESE MPAS INTO PPP; WITH EXCEPTION OF MUZAMMIL SHAH, THEY ALL REGARD THEMSELVES AS FORMING A SEPARATE FACTION WITHIN PPP, OWING ALLEGIANCE TO GANDAPUR RATHER THAN TO PROVINCIAL PPP LEADER AND SENIOR MINISTER HAYAT MOHAMMAD SHERPAO. MANY OBSERVERS IN PESHAWAR BELIEVE THAT GANDAPUR'S DECISION TO LEAD THIS GROUP INTO PPP IS AIMED NOT ONLY AT SOLIDIFYING HIS OWN POSITION AS CHIEF MINISTER BUT ALSO AT SETTING STAGE FOR OBTAINING PRIME MINISTER'S SUPPORT AT LATER DATE TO OUST SHERPAO AS PPP LEADER IN PROVINCE. NEEDLESS TO SAY, CONSULATE'S CONTACTS AGREE THAT WHATEVER IMPACT THE ENTRY OF GANDAPUR GROUP INTO PPP MAY HAVE ON SHERPAO'S CAREER, IT HAS STRENGTHENED PRIME MINISTER'S OWN CONTROL OVER GOVERNMENT COALITION.

6. AS RESULT OF GANDAPUR GROUP'S SWITCH TO PPP, SUPPORTERS OF QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE ARE NOW EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT SURVIVAL CAPACITY OF THEIR OWN PARTY. IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT IF QAIYUM HIMSELF WANTED TO SAVE PARTY FROM BEING ABSORBED BY PPP HE COULD DO IT. BUT MOST MUSLIM LEAGUERS BELIEVE THAT QAIYUM, OUT OF DEFERENCE TO PRIME MINISTER AND DESIRE TO RETAIN HIS PRESENT POST AS FEDERAL HOME MINISTER, WOULD TAKE NO ACTION TO PREVENT PARTY'S DESTRUCTION. IT IS CONSULATE'S VIEW, HOWEVER, THAT PRIME MINISTER, IN ORDER TO AVOID ANTAGONIZING MUSLIM LEAGUE'S FAIRLY LARGE MASS FOLLOWING IN PROVINCE, WILL NOT PUSH AHEAD RAPIDLY TO WIN OVER REMAINING NINE MPAS BELONGING TO QAIYUM'S PARTY.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ISLAMA11206
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740346-0475
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974114/aaaaacpk.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 AUG 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <26 DEC 2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR AND SIX MPAS JOIN PAKISTAN PEOPLES' PARTY
TAGS: PINT, PK, (GANDAPUR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005